

## Snapshot 8.1. Formative Assessment in Grade Five

Fifth graders are working on the following CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: (a) applying the reading standard for informational text: *explaining how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which particular points* (RI.5.8); (b) the writing standard: *produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience* (W.5.4); and (c) the language standard: *vocabulary use* (L.5.4-6), particularly transition words to help their writing flow logically. Students are writing an argument to encourage their readers to take more care of the natural environment. In their reading instruction, they analyzed a text to identify the location of *arguments, counterarguments*, and supporting *evidence*. In their writing, they are learning how to organize their arguments effectively.

While the students are involved in the independent writing part of the lesson, Ms. Hatwal sits with Bobby to discuss his writing progress. She has a ring binder open to a page with these headings at the top: *Child's Name/Date, Research Compliment, Teaching Point*, and *What's Next for this Child?* Further down the page is a self-adhesive note that lists five students' names, including Bobby's. She plans to meet with each of them during today's writing session.

Ms. Hatwal's initial purpose with Bobby is to follow up on feedback she provided him two days ago based on evidence she elicited from an interaction with him; in that interaction she determined that he needed to provide stronger sources of evidence to support his argument. On this occasion, she wants to see how he has used her prior feedback:

Ms. Hatwal: You're working on evidence? Tell me about it.

Bobby: I found good information in the book of the Environmental Protection Agency and on the Internet.

Ms. Hatwal: And what do you think about what you found so far? Do you think that it supports your argument?

Bobby: I guess . . .

At this point, Ms. Hatwal reminds Bobby that the purpose of the evidence is to support his argument. She explains the meaning of "supporting an argument" in a way that is understandable to a fifth grader, by telling him: *You have to prove it with what is in the text or the readers may not believe you*. She asks him to read his argument aloud. Having established that the focus of his argument is to "stop dumping in the ocean because all the beautiful animals we see are going to start vanishing,"

Ms. Hatwal: So, what evidence did you find to support that claim—that all the animals will die if we don't stop dumping? What evidence did you find that will help you to strengthen that argument, or prove it to your readers?

Ms. Hatwal then helps Bobby recognize which of the information he has located is from a reliable source and is effective in supporting his argument. Satisfied that Bobby can move forward on his own to incorporate his evidence, she then asks him to review the organization of his argument and to let her know where he will place the evidence. When Bobby does this, it is evident to Ms. Hatwal that he has some confusion about the overall structure and that his writing needs to be reorganized. This is a moment in the interaction when she targets a teaching point for him. She reviews the organization with him and writes the organizational elements on a self-adhesive note and includes specific instructional support, such as putting the evidence in order to help the flow or adding transitional sentences.

### Snapshot 8.1. Formative Assessment in Grade Five (cont.)

Throughout this interaction, Ms. Hatwal makes notes in her ring-binder file. Under *Research Compliment* she writes that Bobby recognizes the reliability of his source. In the section labeled *Teaching Point* she writes that she explained how evidence supported his argument. Under the heading *What's Next for this Child?* she writes “organization and transitional sentences,” noting that Bobby has problems organizing his writing to effectively convey his argument to the reader. By gathering evidence in the course of this interaction, Ms. Hatwal is able to match her teaching points to the individual student’s needs. Additionally, after several interactions of this kind, she finds that there are common needs among several students and decides to pull them together for a mini-lesson.

### Snapshot 8.2. Formative Assessment in Grade Two

In a second-grade classroom that includes native English speaking children and children who are ELs, the children have been working on retelling folktales they have read together in class to convey the central message of the tale (RL.2.2). The EL children, in particular, have been working on using the past tense to indicate that the tales happened in the past (ELD.PII.2.3). In this lesson students are engaged in small group work, and during this time the teacher, Mr. Elfert, selects groups of three students to recount one of the folktales the class has read that week. In this situation, he wants to give each student sustained opportunities to use language while he and the others in the group listen. He asks the first student to begin, then after a while asks the second child to carry on and so forth. When the students have completed the retelling, Mr. Elfert asks them to say what they think the main message of the story is. Each child offers an opinion and a discussion follows about whether there is agreement on the main message. From the activity, Mr. Elfert has evidence that one student uses the past tense consistently and mostly with accuracy, while the other two do not. Two of the children are able to convey the message of the text, but another has not grasped it. After his discussion with the group, he makes quick notes about each student and briefly records his thoughts about subsequent instruction. He repeats this process with one additional group before the small group work time is over, and he plans more opportunities during the week to assess other small groups in the same way.